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Flood & Disaster Frequently Asked Questions

I have well water. How do I know if it is contaminated?

- The Indiana State Department of Health (ISDH) is offering free well water testing. Contact your [local health department](#) to receive a free sampling kit to submit to the ISDH lab for free testing. Results can be expected a few days after submission. Well water samples must be submitted to the lab within 30 hours of being collected for valid results. Individuals can drop off water sampling kits at the lab in person, at 550 W. 16th Street in downtown Indianapolis from 8:15 a.m. to 4:45 p.m. (local time), Monday thru Friday.

How do I avoid mold in my home?

- The most effective way to eliminate mold growth is to remove it from materials that can be cleaned and to discard materials that cannot be cleaned or are physically damaged beyond use. Persons with respiratory conditions, allergies, asthma, or weakened immune systems should avoid mold cleanup if possible, or seek the advice of their doctor and determine what type of personal protective equipment is appropriate. For more information, visit: www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/rr5508a1.htm?s_cid=rr5508a1_e

What food can I still use after a flood?

- As a result of flooded conditions in homes, large quantities of foodstuffs may be submerged in flood water or sewerage backflow. **As a general rule, food should not be salvaged unless it is in a container that protects it and is one which can be thoroughly cleaned with soap and water and sterilized with boiling water or chlorine.** Since paper, cardboard, wood, and most plastic food containers are not waterproof, foods in such containers which have been under floodwater should be destroyed. For more information, visit: www.in.gov/isdh/23580.htm.

Do I need to worry about mosquitoes?

- Once the flood waters recede, remaining standing water is ideal breeding grounds for mosquitoes that carry the West Nile virus. State health officials recommend applying insect repellant containing DEET, Picardin, or oil of lemon eucalyptus to clothes and exposed skin to protect themselves from being bitten by a mosquito. People should also take steps to remove standing water on their property, including dispose of old tires, tin cans, plastic containers, ceramic pots or other unused containers that can hold water.

Can floodwater make me sick?

- Yes, floodwater can be contaminated with a variety of contaminants, including sewage. Individuals exposed to floodwaters should wash their hands thoroughly with warm, soapy water. For more information on diseases caused by sewage-contaminated water, visit: www.in.gov/isdh/files/diseases.pdf

What do I need to know about safely cleaning up my home after a flood?

- Following are some basic cleaning tips. For more information, visit www.in.gov/isdh/23581.htm:
 - Turn off the electricity.
 - Clean and dry wet light fixtures before turning the electricity back on.
 - For household cleaning after floodwater contamination, disinfect all surfaces. A bleach solution of ¼-cup chlorine bleach to one gallon of water works well.
 - Items that cannot be salvaged after a flood and must be thrown away include wet ceiling tiles, paper products, baseboards, gypsum board (also known as dry wall), and insulation.
 - Carpets may be saved by wet vacuuming, shampooing, and making certain the carpet is completely dry.
 - Mattresses or other large items soaked with floodwater will probably have to be discarded. Some mattresses can be salvaged after disinfecting and air-drying.
 - Wipe wood and metal studs with a bleach solution and allow to air dry.
 - If possible, open windows and doors during the clean-up process and leave them open for at least 24 hours.

What is my risk for tetanus?

- State health officials recommend people in flooded areas make sure they are up-to-date on their tetanus immunizations. Any type of wound, major or minor, could be an entry source for the tetanus organism, which can be found in floodwater. Routine tetanus boosters are recommended every 10 years. For people who receive more serious wounds, a tetanus booster is appropriate if they have not received one within the last 5 years. Tetanus vaccines are available from your primary health care provider or your local health department. A complete listing of local health departments is available on the State Department of Health Web site at: www.statehealth.in.gov by clicking on “Indiana Local Health Departments.” For more information on tetanus, visit www.in.gov/isdh/22437.htm.